

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 171

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, KS

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH CHANG CHUN-HA

BEGIN SUMMARY: SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN LEADER CHANG CHUN-HA SAYS THAT DRIVE WILL CONTINUE IN SPITE OF JAN 8 EMERGENCY MEASURES. LEADERS PREPARED TO BE ARRESTED IN THEIR ATTEMPT TO FORCE PRESIDENT'S HAND. END SUMMARY.

1. CHANG CHUN-HA, FORMER NATIONAL ASSEMBLYMAN, JOURNALIST AND NOW A LEADER OF CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN HAD LUNCH JAN 9 WITH EMBOFF. CHANG SAID THAT THE GROUP HAD MET YESTERDAY FOLLOWING THE PRESIDENTIAL ANNOUNCEMENT PROHIBITING ANTI-YUSHIN CRITICISM. GROUP REALIZED THAT ARREST POSSIBLE, BUT CHANG SAID THEY HAD DECIDED TO CONTINUE DRIVE REGARDLESS OF CONSEQUENCES IN EFFORT TO MAKE PRESIDENT CHANGE CONSTITUTION. CHANG SAID THAT IN EVENT THE LEADERS ARE ARRESTED, PREPARATIONS HAVE BEEN MADE FOR OTHERS TO CONTINUE, ALTHOUGH LACK OF MEDIA COVERAGE WILL PROBABLY RESULT IN SOME SLOWDOWN.

2. ACCORDING TO CHANG, THE SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN HAS EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS; THE PREVIOUS WEEK THE 300,000 MARK WAS REACHED, AND THE ORIGINAL GROUP OF 30 LEADERS HAS GROWN TO MORE THAN 100, EACH CONDUCTING HIS OWN SEMI-INDEPENDENT CAMPAIGN. PART OF THE SUCCESS
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OF THE DRIVE HE FEELS WAS THE OVERREACTION ON THE PART OF THE

GOVERNMENT, WHICH PUBLICIZED THE CAMPAIGN AND MADE IT A FOCAL POINT FOR ALL ANTI-GOVERNMENT ELEMENTS. CHANG MENTIONED THAT THE MOVEMENT HAD BEGUN TO SPREAD OUT FROM CHRISTIAN AND CAMPUS CIRCLES INTO NORMALLY CONSERVATIVE GROUPS OF YOUNG BUDDHISTS. HE FEELS THE SPEED WITH WHICH THE MOVEMENT WAS GROWING CAUSED PRESIDENT PARK TO ACT WHEN HE DID.

3. CHANG SEES TWO POSSIBLE RESULTS OF CONFRONTATION. PARK COULD REALIZE NECESSITY FOR COMPROMISE AND CHANGE YUSHIN SYSTEM. A MORE LIKELY RESULT, HE SAID, WOULD BE ADDITIONAL GOVERNMENT REPRESSION, INCLUDING ARREST OF PROTEST LEADERS, WHICH COULD LEAD TO A VIOLENT CONFRONTATION "WORSE THAN THAT WHICH TOOK PLACE RECENTLY IN THAILAND."

4. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ABOUT ROLE OF OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES IN SIGNATURE DRIVE, CHANG SAID THAT AFTER PRESIDENT HAS EITHER BACKED DOWN OR GOVERNMENT FALLEN, "TRUE OPPOSITION LEADERS" FROM NDP, DUP SHOULD JOIN WITH OTHER OPPOSITION LEADERS TO FORM A NEW PARTY, BUT THE ORGANIZED PARTIES ARE NOW TOO DISCREDITED TO BE MUCH OF AN ASSET IN THE PRESENT CAMPAIGN.

5. LUNCHEON APPOINTMENT WITH CHANG MADE PRIOR TO JAN 8 ANNOUNCEMENT. CHANG WAS UNDER OBVIOUS SURVEILLANCE BOTH TO AND FROM MEETING, WE ASSUME BY ROK/CIA.
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